

SENATE BILL NO. 10

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATORS BEGICH, Olson, Revak, Gray-Jackson, Wielechowski, Kiehl, Kawasaki

Introduced: 1/22/21

Referred: Labor & Commerce, Education, Finance

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 **"An Act establishing a grant program to provide to essential workers the tuition and**
2 **fees to attend a state-supported postsecondary educational institution."**

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 * **Section 1.** The uncoded law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section
5 to read:

6 **ESSENTIAL WORKER GRANT PROGRAM.** (a) Subject to appropriation, the
7 Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education shall award a grant in an amount equal to
8 the recipient's cost of annual undergraduate tuition and fees at a state-supported postsecondary
9 educational institution to a person who

10 (1) applies on a form provided by the commission;

11 (2) was employed as an essential worker in the state when the federal
12 government declared a public health emergency on January 31, 2020, and

13 (A) maintains employment as an essential worker for the duration of
14 the public health emergency; or

- 1 (B) was temporarily or permanently laid off;
- 2 (3) is enrolled or about to be enrolled at a state-supported postsecondary
- 3 educational institution as a half-time or full-time student;
- 4 (4) has been a resident of the state for at least 12 months;
- 5 (5) has received, or will receive within six months after applying for a grant
- 6 under this section, a high school diploma or general educational development certificate;
- 7 (6) has earned a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher in high
- 8 school or has otherwise demonstrated an equivalent academic ability, as specified by the
- 9 commission in regulation;
- 10 (7) has completed and submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid
- 11 for each academic year, if eligible, and accepted all state and federal aid grants available to
- 12 the person; and
- 13 (8) has not completed more than a total of 90 credit hours, or the equivalent, at
- 14 a postsecondary educational institution.
- 15 (b) A recipient of a grant under this section is eligible to receive a grant for another
- 16 term if the person
- 17 (1) maintains a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher during each
- 18 term for which the person has received a grant under this section, unless waived in accordance
- 19 with regulations adopted by the commission;
- 20 (2) makes satisfactory progress toward a curriculum, degree, or program, as
- 21 specified by the commission in regulation; and
- 22 (3) maintains enrollment as a half-time or full-time student.
- 23 (c) The commission shall
- 24 (1) establish an application process for participation in the program;
- 25 (2) implement policies that improve the academic success or completion rates
- 26 of students who receive a grant under this section;
- 27 (3) evaluate the effects of the grant program for the purpose of preparing the
- 28 report required under sec. 2 of this Act.
- 29 (d) The total amount of grants awarded under this section may not exceed
- 30 \$10,000,000 in a fiscal year. If the amount appropriated in a fiscal year is insufficient to meet
- 31 the amounts awarded under (a) and (b) of this section, the commission shall prioritize

1 payment of grants based on need according to the expected family contribution reported on
 2 each applicant's Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

3 (e) The commission may adopt regulations necessary to implement this section.

4 (f) In this section,

5 (1) "commission" means the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education;

6 (2) "essential worker" means a person who is employed on a full-time or part-
 7 time basis as

8 (A) hospital or nursing home personnel;

9 (B) a personal care attendant;

10 (C) a childcare provider for children of critical infrastructure workers;

11 (D) an employee of a personal protective equipment manufacturer;

12 (E) a public safety employee;

13 (F) janitorial or cleaning personnel;

14 (G) a solid waste disposal worker;

15 (H) a delivery driver;

16 (I) a grocery store worker; or

17 (J) document or record destruction personnel;

18 (3) "full-time student" means an undergraduate or career education student
 19 who enrolls in and regularly attends classes for at least 12 semester hours of credit or the
 20 equivalent during the semester; any combination of semester hours of credit, or the
 21 equivalent, aggregating to the requisite number of semester hours and undertaken during a
 22 semester at two or more public or private institutions of higher education constitutes full-time
 23 student status;

24 (4) "half-time student" means

25 (A) an undergraduate or career education student who, during the
 26 semester, enrolls in and regularly attends classes at one or more public or private
 27 institutions of higher education for six to 11 semester credit hours or an equivalent of
 28 six to 11 semester credit hours; or

29 (B) a career education student who enrolls in and regularly attends
 30 classes for 15 hours a week.

31 * **Sec. 2.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to

1 read:

2 ESSENTIAL WORKER GRANT PROGRAM REPORT. On or before December 31
3 of each calendar year, the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education shall submit a
4 report to the senate secretary and chief clerk of the house of representatives and notify the
5 legislature that the report is available. The report must include

6 (1) student completion rates of the curricula, degrees, and programs described
7 in sec. 1(b)(2) of this Act;

8 (2) the amount of federal aid awarded to grant recipients under sec. 1 of this
9 Act;

10 (3) the effects of the grant program on the enrollment and finances of state-
11 supported postsecondary educational institutions;

12 (4) the overall success rate and financial effects of the grant program.

13 * **Sec. 3.** Section 1 of this Act is repealed on the earlier of

14 (1) the date the public health emergency declared by the federal government
15 expires; or

16 (2) the date the federal government determines that the public health
17 emergency no longer exists.

18 * **Sec. 4.** Section 2 of this Act is repealed January 1, 2025.